

The How To Do Series

PUPPETS

by
ELEANOR BROOKS



LITERACY. HOUSE
ONE, BUND ROAD, ALLAHABAD



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P R E F A C E

LITERACY HOUSE presents this book on 'Puppets' to social workers, village teachers and others interested in solving village problems through the art of puppetry.

PUPPETS has been written by Eleanor Brooks, R.N., teacher of puppetry in the Agricultural Institute, Allahabad, and Organizer of Puppetry in the Jumnapar Nirman Project. It tells its readers how to make simple hand puppets, how to work them and how to prepare a puppet-stage.

For a number of years Mrs. Brooks has taught this art of puppetry so skillfully that a revival of its use is taking place in Uttar Pradesh and other provinces. For the sake of those who work in villages, she has reduced it to its simplest form. On page after page she has given easy steps to the creation of puppets as well as to the skill of working them, and to the preparation of the stage.

There will be found within its pages also some hints for the writing of puppet plays. Four model plays, written by trainees of Literacy House, under supervision of Shri L. C. Jacob of our staff, are also included.

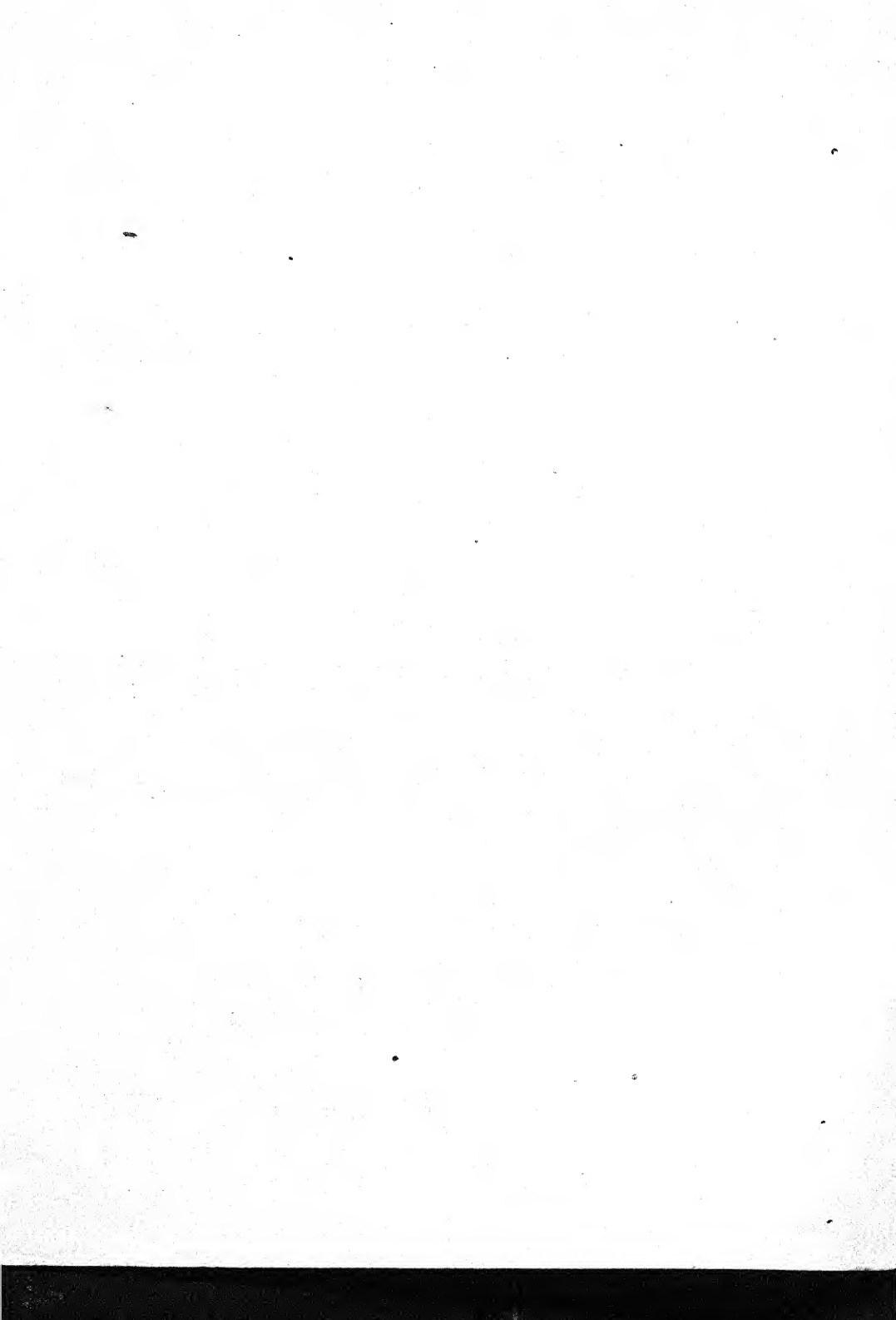
We acknowledge the help of our Administrator, Mrs. Welthy H. Fisher, who as always is a source of inspiration to us in publishing useful books. This book is the result of her encouragement.

Literacy House is hopeful that this book will prove useful to our colleagues who are working in the framework of Social Education.

RAM TELANG
Editor

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CHAPTER I
PUPPETS FOR VILLAGE WORKERS
AND HOW TO MAKE THEM

Puppets are Ancient.

Long years ago, perhaps in our very village, men and women must have gathered time after time to watch puppet-shows. The puppets may have been different from those of today. Their costumes may have been more elegant, too, but the fun and the laughter must have been the same. There are many echoes from the past that make us sure that puppetry in India is one of the most ancient arts.

Some students of the art of puppetry think that this was the earliest kind of drama developed by man any where and many think these artists were our Indian ancestors. However that may be, we at least have evidences of its existence hundreds of years ago. Still the most interesting fact for us is, that even today puppetry is practised in almost all the countries of the world. It has been weaving itself slowly and permanently into the cultures of all peoples both East and West.

Puppets Suit the Village:

First, because the material for the puppets, the costumes and the stage can be found in even the poorest village.

Second, because all the world loves to "play actor"; so the village people both old and young can find a place in some of the dramas.

Third, because rich and poor, scholar and illiterate, old and young, all love to see the best man win in the play. They all alike laugh in the comedies, and weep in the tragedies, and see that the

problems of the play apply to all castes and creeds alike. It takes the edge off their prejudices, therefore.

Puppets therefore have unlimited possibilities in the village for:

1. Entertainment,
2. Education,
3. Self-expression,
4. Social Action.

Puppets Entertain.

In order to hold your audience and keep them from running back to their homes between the acts, the play must have suspense. Listeners must not know how the story will end; how the problem will be solved. They must be kept wondering about it until the very end. And all the way through the play there should be puns, wit, humour and as much music as the village can produce. In most villages this is considerable.

The high points of the witty passages will be sharpened if the village idiom is used. Bright colours will attract attention, and well made puppets, dramatically manipulated, will make the characters come alive. The characters should be such that the audience can see themselves in them.

Puppets Educate.

The persons who make the puppets and act out the plays are called puppeteers. They become more expert in acting and writing the plays, the more plays they produce.

By various means they get a keen insight into human nature and a deeper understanding of human emotions. Not only the puppeteer is being educated but the listeners are being educated as well and that quite painlessly.

The audience is learning as it looks and listens. Puppetry becomes a true audio-visual aid to teaching.

Down through the years religious teachers have used puppets to make the stories from the sacred scriptures real to the people.

Through this method and through the skill of story telling the sacred scriptures are now well known even to illiterates. However, today, in this era of science, teachers are using puppets as a medium for many scientific subjects.

Health, agriculture, literacy, *sanitation* are dramatized on the puppet stage with startling effect. There is almost nothing that can not be taught by the amazing little creatures called puppets. They dance, they sing, they turn a hand-spring but always in the interest of social action and inner change.

Age-old traditions are being looked at critically as the puppets move about the stage, looking backward at the old and looking forward to the new.

The Illiterate Stops, Looks, and Listens.

Since villagers are mostly illiterate the audience viewing the puppets are mostly so. Sometimes they are familiar with the play and sometimes not. If it is a religious play they know it but if it is a new scientific idea, they do not.

The audience comes for entertainment but usually goes away with a new idea. Both the literate and the illiterate see hope for a more wholesome community. The illiterate decides during the play that like the hero he will learn to read and write. The literate decides during the same play to begin teaching his illiterate neighbours. Both are being educated.

Puppets Help Self-Expression.

You will notice that even shy people are quite willing to manipulate puppets and learn their parts. This is because the puppeteer is hidden from sight and he has no self-consciousness whatsoever. He lets himself go and finds that he has really had his first chance at self-expression.

In the development of personality this is an important step. So use your shy villagers in the plays. You will help to make new leaders.

Puppets Stir Social Action.

In time villagers themselves will be putting on their own plays. Often their plays will reveal their common problems. Their jokes will often be sharp-pointed and effective. Here is a story of how one village got rid of a nuisance:

The story was called **THE DRAMA CHANGES MOTI LAL**. Moti Lal was a selfish man. The whole village suffered because he would not clean the cesspool in front of his house. Flies collected there and multiplied rapidly. The smell got worse and worse.

So, a group of villagers decided to put on a puppet play in which one of the characters would be like Moti Lal. In the course of the play puppet Motilal was ridiculed. The people laughed and laughed at him. Now, the real Moti Lal sat in the audience and as he realized the meaning of the ridicule, he became so ashamed that he sneaked away and no one saw him again until the cesspool was thoroughly cleaned.

Social action was stimulated and a change occurred without a quarrel.

Puppets Interest Children.

Children are entranced by puppets. They want to make them and handle them. It does not matter if the puppets are crudely made, for children do not notice their defects. The most elaborately made puppets of course exercise the imagination. But how much more do the crude puppets made by the children themselves! The charm of puppets is magic and enchantment.

As soon as a child is old enough to make anything with his hands, he can make a puppet. When a child makes a puppet, he makes a person. That person may be you. You can learn what children think of adults by listening to them as they play with puppets. Children have vivid imaginations, and can even dispense with curtains and screens. They do not see the puppeteer. They see only the puppet. Let children make puppets. Then let them sit in a ring, each with a puppet on his hand, and very soon a play is composed, each child identifying himself with his puppet.

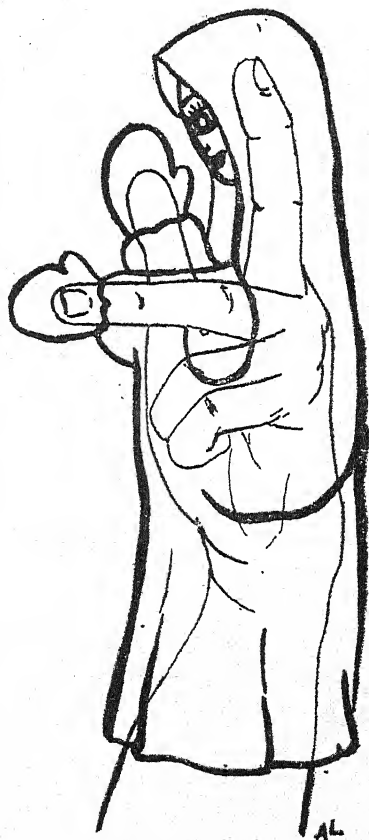
CHAPTER II

KINDS OF PUPPETS

There are many different kinds of puppets. You will need to choose the kind best suited to your purpose, remembering what materials are available, and under what conditions you are going to show the puppets and what is your purpose in showing them.

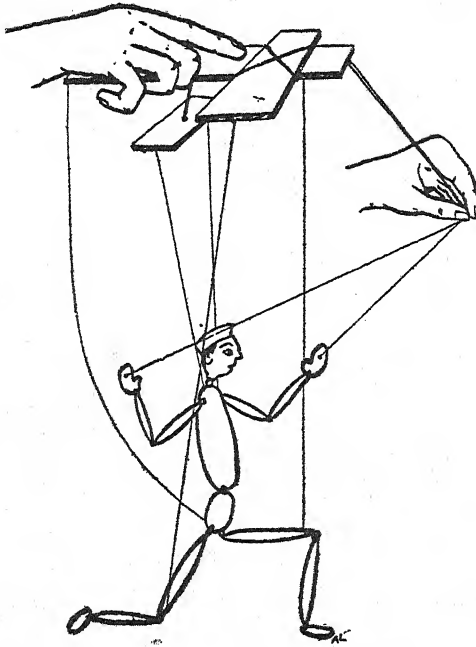
The Glove or Hand Puppet

The Glove or Hand Puppet is the simplest type to make. It is worn on the hand. The puppet head is hollow and fits on the first finger of the puppeteer's hand. The puppet hands are hollow and fit on the thumb and middle finger of the puppeteer's hand. The puppet body is its dress into which the puppeteer fits fore-arm. The puppet has no legs. One puppeteer can manage two puppets at a time, one on his right hand and one on his left. He moves only the puppet which is talking. The other keeps quite still.



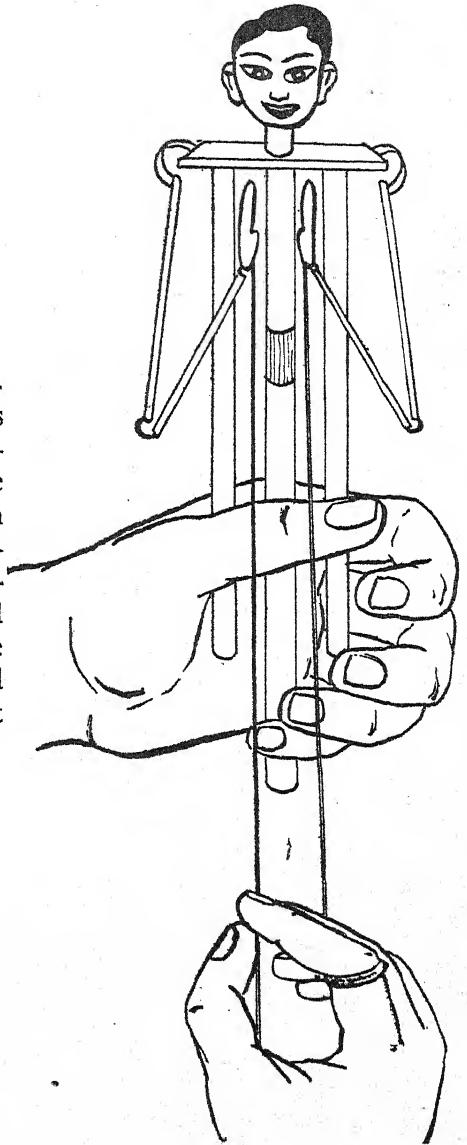
He changes his voice, so that each puppet sounds different from the other puppet.

The M^ariionette or String Puppet



The marionette or string puppet has a jointed body and limbs. It can be made of wood, wire, paper, string, cloth stuffed with paper, rag or sawdust. It is suspended by strings which are attached to different places on the body and limbs, and to a control in the puppeteer's hands. Movement of the puppet is produced by moving the control and by pulling or loosening the strings. This requires considerable practice.

The Rod Puppet is controlled by rods or stiff wires from beneath. Its body consists of vertical rods. The middle rod is jointed, and on its upper end the head is fixed. The vertical rods are joined together by a horizontal rod, or crossbar, where the shoulders should be, and from this hang the arms. It has no legs.



CHAPTER III

HOW TO MAKE A SIMPLE HAND PUPPET

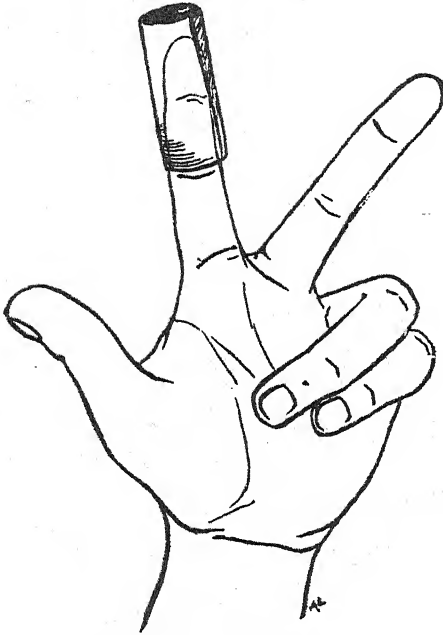
This puppet can be made in a very short time. The person making it need not be very skillful. The materials used in making are easily obtained. Even scraps can be used to make the puppet.

First collect the following things:

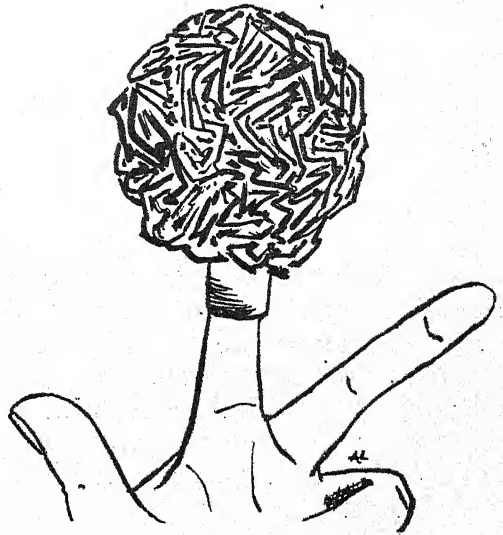
1. Cardboard—a piece about the size and thickness of a postal card. A used postal card will do.
2. Glue or Paste.
3. Old Newspaper—One full sheet will be enough to stuff a $2\frac{1}{2}$ inch long head.
4. Paper—on which there is no print, writing or picture. A piece about 9 to 12 inches square covers a $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches long head. Stout brown wrapping paper or the inside of a large brown envelop will do.
5. String—Two pieces, each about 8 inches long.
6. Black ink or paint.
7. Red ink or paint.
8. White chalk or paint.
9. Pens, brushes or a small pointed stick.
10. Gay coloured cloth—A piece about $\frac{1}{2}$ yard square will do.
11. Needle and thread.
12. A pair of scissors.

Proceed as follows:

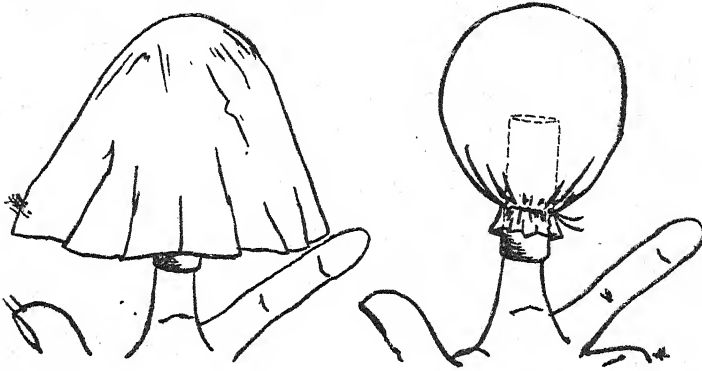
1. Roll the cardboard around your first finger, making a tube which fits the finger snugly. Paste or glue the tube firmly. This will be the neck of the puppet.



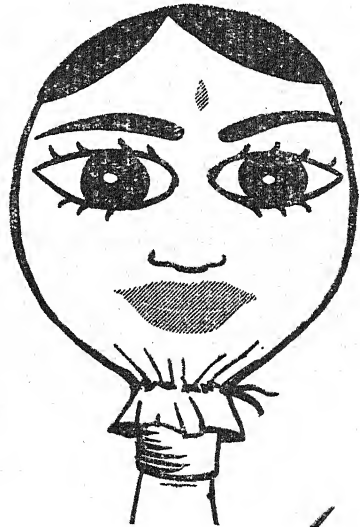
2. Crumple the newspaper to make the stuffing of the head. Press the crumpled newspaper over and around the tube on your finger, roughly shaping it.



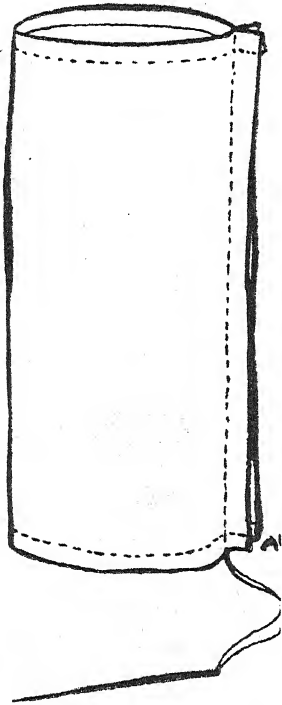
3. Cover the crumpled newspaper stuffing with the sheet of plain paper in such a way that the side on which the face will be painted is as free of creases as possible. Put all creases and folds on the other sides and back where the hair will be. Tie the paper in place at the neck, using one of the pieces of string. Tie tightly, but do not block the opening in the tube.



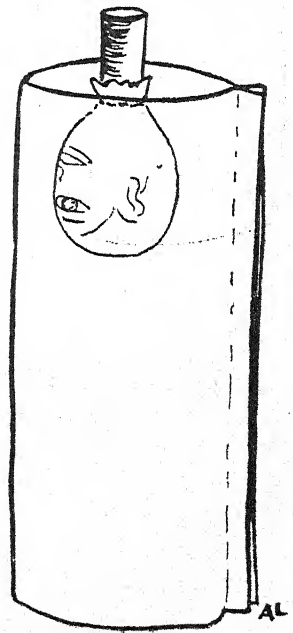
4. Paint the face on the smooth side of the head. Do not attempt to paint all the features. A few bold features are most effective: for example, large black eyes with a white dot in the centre; long sweeping eye brows; a very few lashes; a wide red mouth.



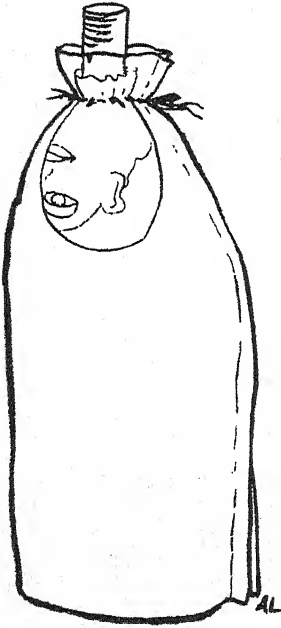
5. Take a piece of bright coloured cloth and sew it to form a tube of cloth, long enough to cover your hand and forearm.



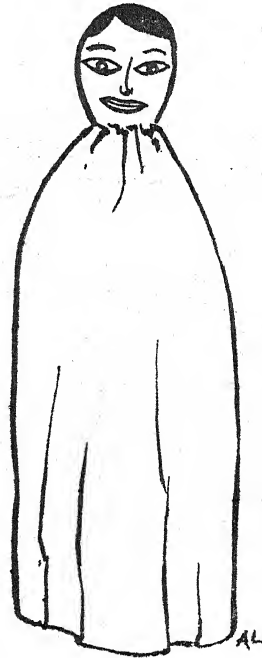
6. Put the head inside the cloth tube upside down, so that the back of the head is towards the seam.



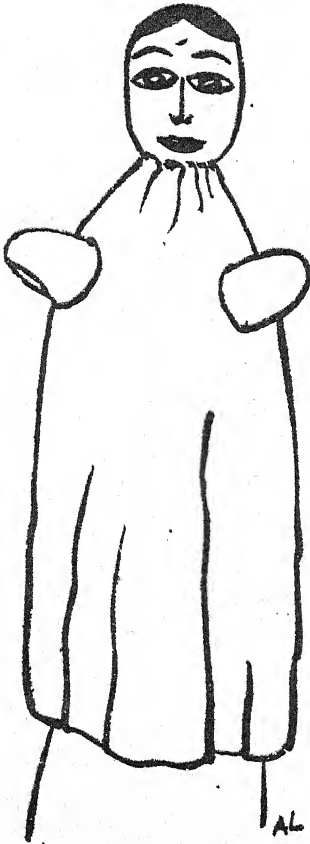
7. With the second piece of string, tie the cloth onto the neck tube. Tie firmly with three knots. Do not block the opening in the neck tube.



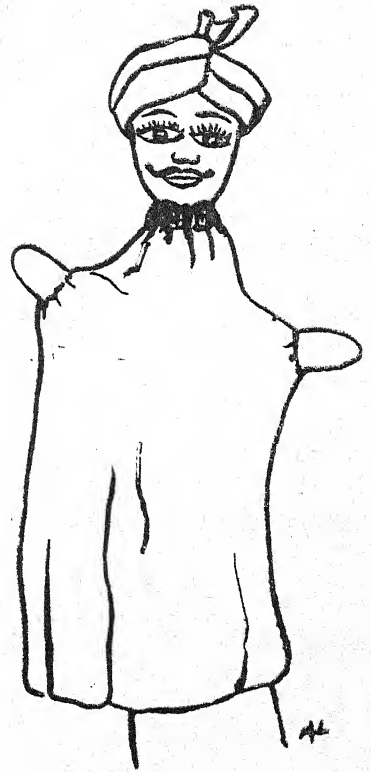
8. Turn the cloth right side out, so that the head is exposed.



9. Put the puppet on your hand, your first finger into the neck and let the dress fall down over your forearm. Cut slits for the tips of your thumb and middle finger to peep through. These are the puppet's hands.



10. Add any distinguishing marks such as a moustache or beard. Make a turban or cap for a man, or a sari for a woman.





11. Give the puppet a name.
12. Practise moving the puppet in front of a mirror until the puppet looks as if it were alive.

CHAPTER IV

HOW TO MAKE A PUPPET WITH A MOULDED PAPER MACHE HEAD

This puppet will have modelled features. It will take longer to make than the one described in the last chapter. It requires some skill in modelling, but can be a more finished product than the simple puppet already shown.

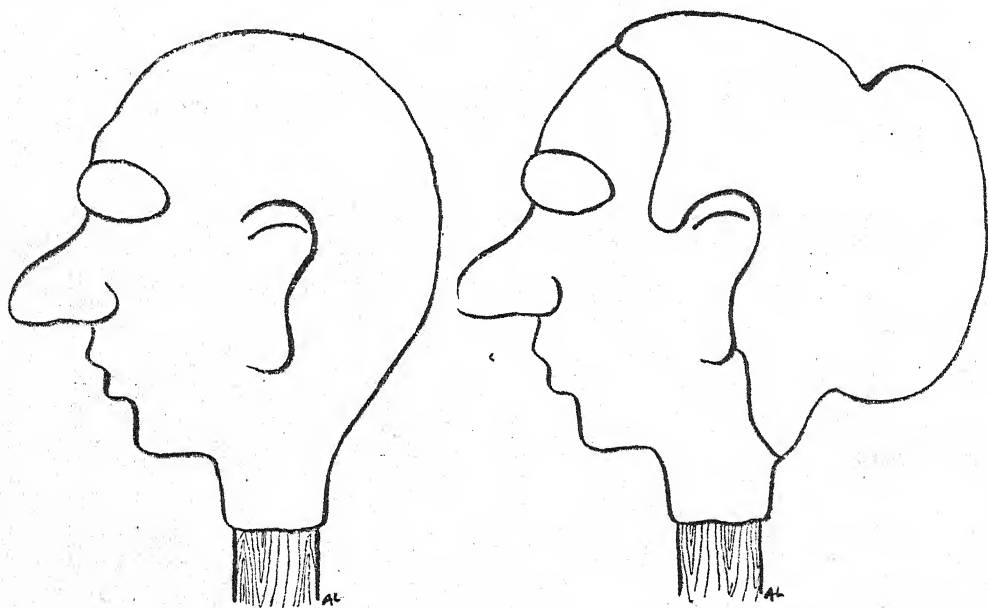
Materials Needed:

1. Plasticine or potter's clay (A lump about the size of the head you wish to make) One pound makes a head about $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches long.
2. A small wooden rod about the size of your first finger.
3. Old newspapers torn, not cut, into little pieces of various irregular shapes.
4. Plain brown craft wrapping paper, torn, not cut, into little pieces of various shapes.
5. A saucer or other small shallow vessel of water.
6. Some glue or paste (If flour paste is made, add copper sulphate crystals. This discourages moulds and insects. Mix in enough crystals to give a decided blue colour to the paste.)
7. A pointed wooden tool for modelling.
8. A sharp knife.
9. A piece of gay coloured cloth roughly one-half yard square for the dress.
10. Scraps of bright coloured cloth for trimmings, caps, scarves, etc.
11. A pair of scissors.
12. A strip of flesh coloured cloth or other material suitable for making hands.

13. A piece of string about 8 to 10 inches long.
14. Needle and thread.
15. Paints—red, black, and white.
16. Brushes.

Directions.

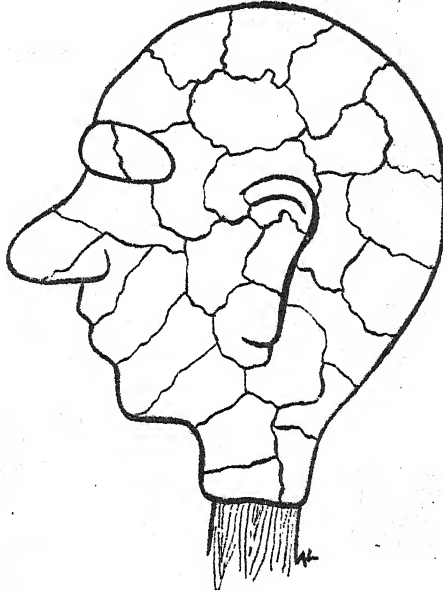
1. The size of the head depends on the audience for whom it is intended. The larger the head, the farther away it can be seen. The usual size is $3\frac{1}{2}$ " to 4" long. A head longer than 5" is difficult to handle and looks top heavy. Model the puppet head in plasticine or clay, giving it prominent features, exaggerating its important characteristics but omitting all detail.



2. Place the head on the small wooden rod about the size of your first finger, so that the rod is now the puppet's neck.

3. If clay has been used, allow it to dry, then smear soap or vaseline on the surface of the model.

4. Wet the torn pieces of newspaper in the saucer of water and press a layer all over the model of the head, fitting pieces so that they overlap slightly and no spaces are left bare. Take care to press the pieces into all the creases and depressions using the pointed wooden tool to help fit them into place, so that this layer fits evenly and closely on the model.



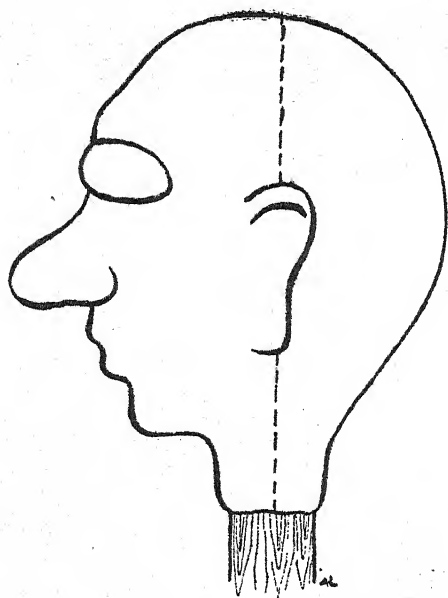
5. Before the first layer dries, paste a second layer of torn pieces of paper over the first layer, taking care that it also is evenly spread and closely adhering and that no spaces are left uncovered. Allow to dry.

6. Paste pieces of plain craft brown wrapping paper over the newspaper layer in the same manner, that is, evenly spread, closely adhering with no spaces left uncovered. Allow this layer to dry.

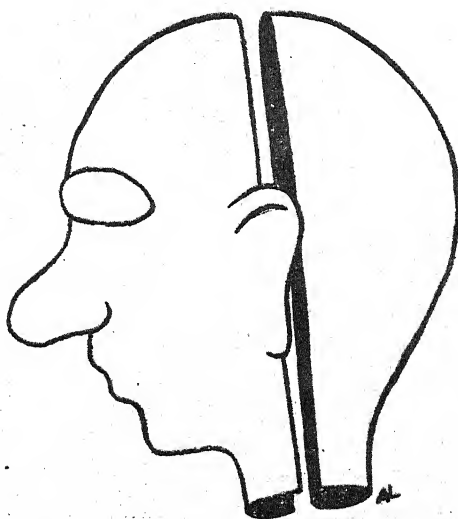
7. Paste alternate layers of newspaper and plain craft brown wrapping paper as already described in directions 5 and 6 until

there are at least 6 to 8 layers of paper on the model.

8. When the shell or paper covering of the model is dry and firmly stuck (usually after one day) cut it into two halves with a sharp knife, making a clean cut behind the ears on either side of the neck.



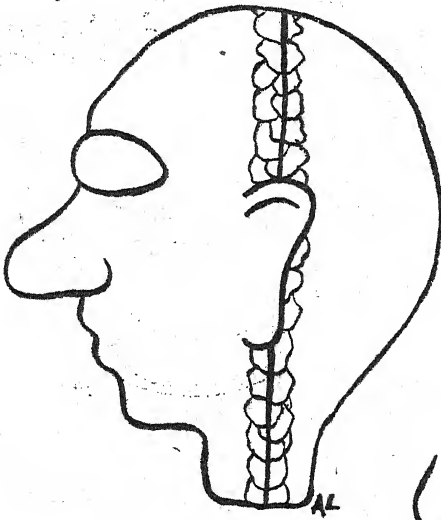
9. Carefully ease the paper shell off the model, taking care not to distort its shape.



10. Clean out any clay or plasticine which remains sticking to the inside of this paper shell, digging out the remnants with the pointed wooden tool.

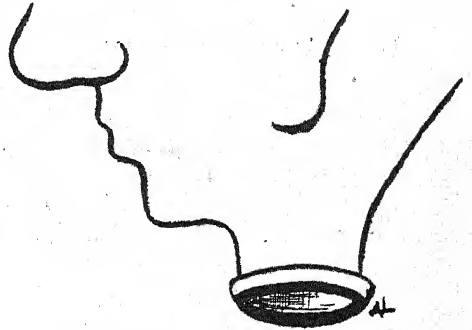
11. Stuff all crevices inside the shell such as the inside of the nose, eyes, mouth and ears with paper or sawdust soaked in glue, and allow to dry.

12. When completely dry join the two halves of the shell together with several small pieces of torn plain brown craft wrapping paper. Several layers will be necessary.

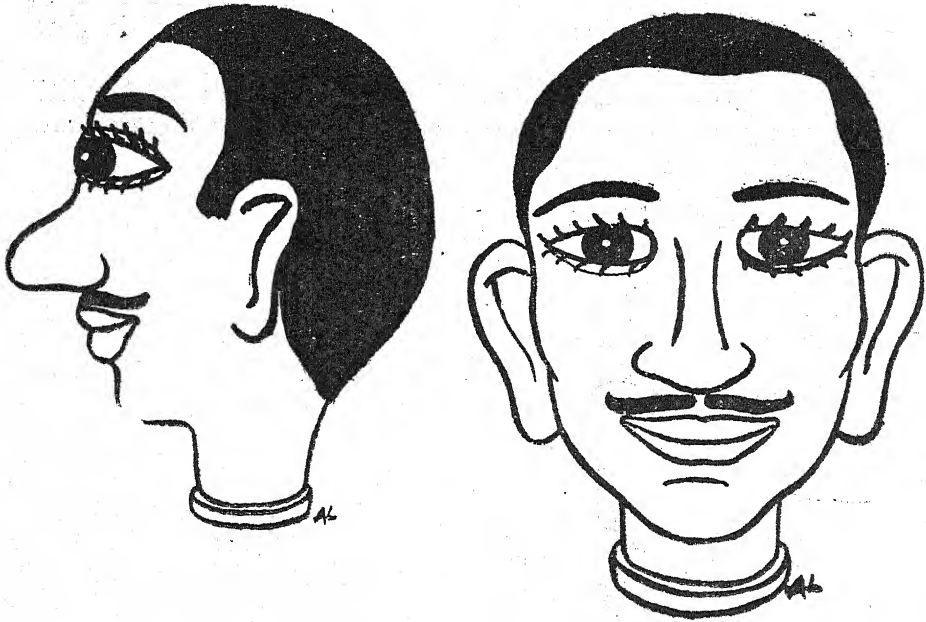


13. Paste a layer of torn brown craft wrapping paper all over this shell, which is now the head of the puppet.

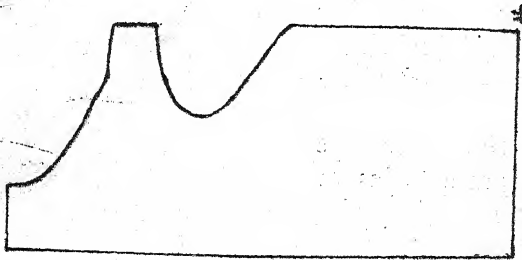
14. At the lower edge of the neck paste strips of paper to form a raised rim or collar.

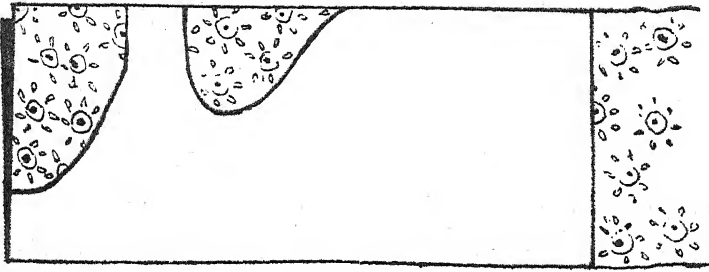


15. Paint bold features with no details. A few eye lashes are more effective than a thick fringe.

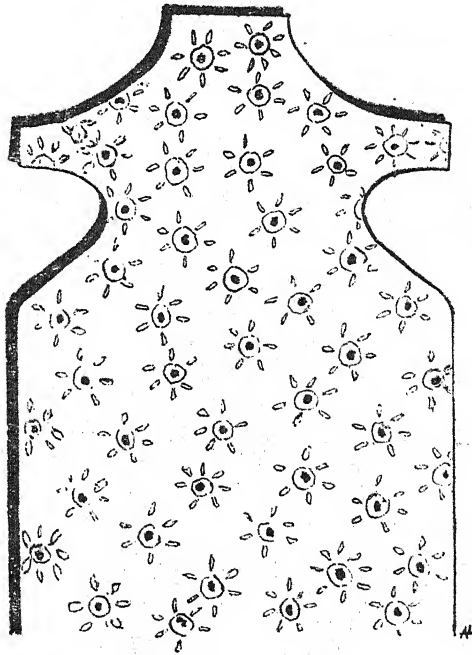


16. Make a paper pattern of the dress as in this diagram.



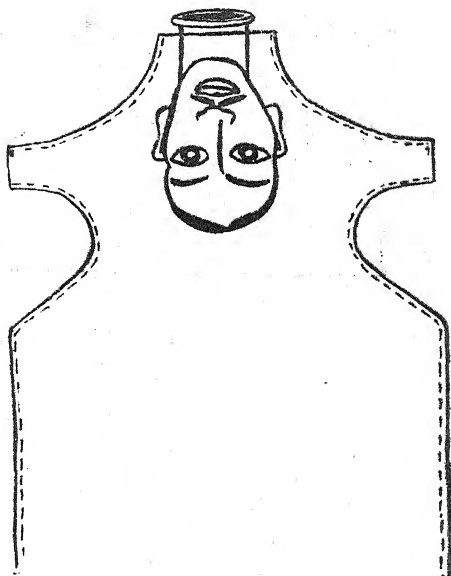


17. Take a double thickness of cloth and fold it in half length-ways. Lay the paper pattern on the cloth and cut the cloth so that you get a dress shaped like this :

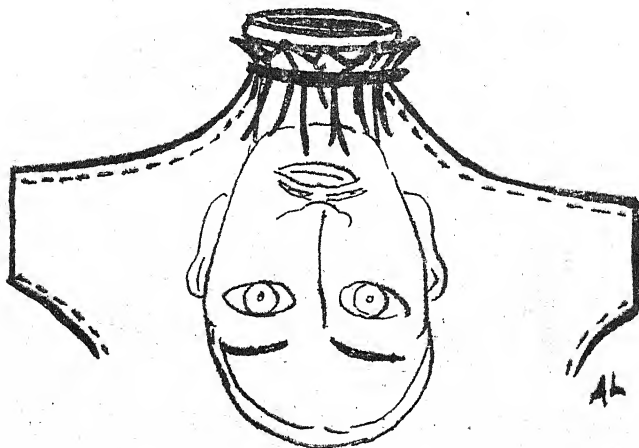


18. Sew a seam down either side of the dress. Hem the neck and bottom edges.

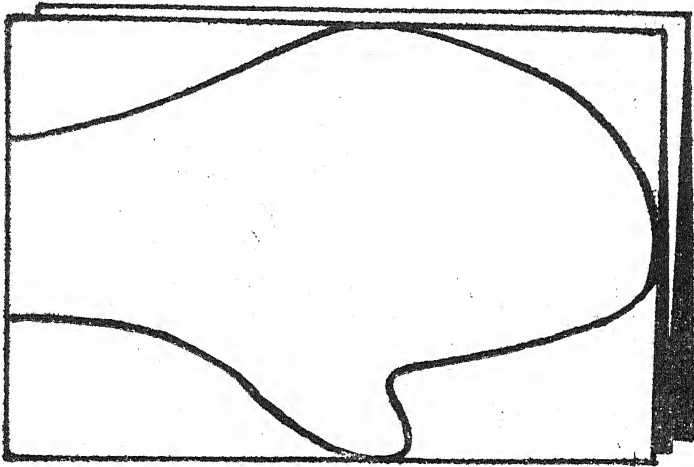
19. Place the puppet's head inside the dress upside down



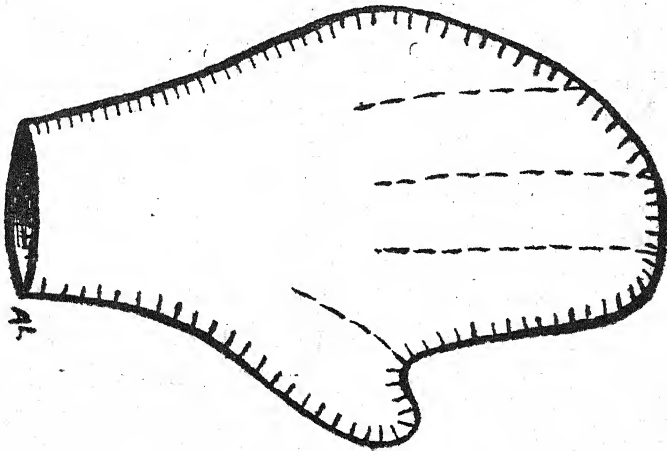
20. Tie firmly at the neck, in such a way that the collar or rim at the lower edge of the neck prevents the dress from pulling off.



21. To make the puppet's hands, fold the strips of flesh coloured material into four thicknesses and cut out two mittens or gloves like this.



22. Sew two hands, button-holing the edges as shown in this diagram.



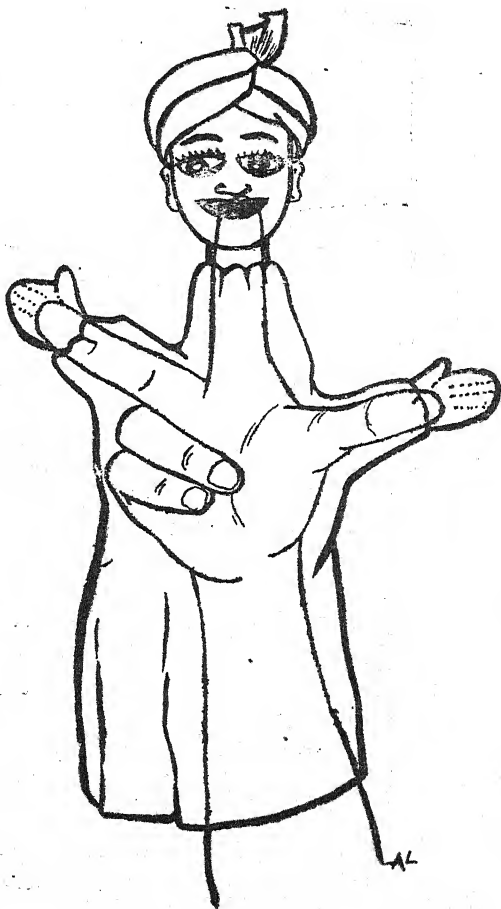
23. Make running stitches to give the idea of fingers and thumb.

24. Sew a hand into each sleeve of the dress, to fit the tip of the puppeteer's thumb and middle finger.

25. Turn the dress right side out. Add cap, turban, saree or scarf to give character to the puppet.

26. The puppet is now ready for use. Give it a name. Put it on your hand. Practise moving it in front of a mirror. Only you can make it come to life. See how much you can make it express in gestures.

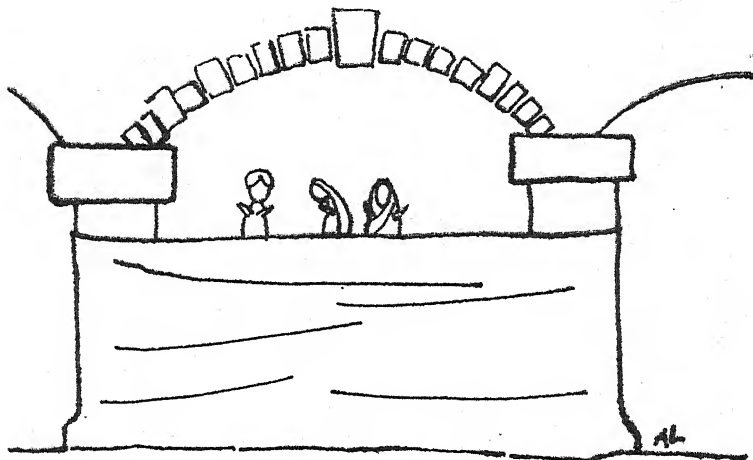
27. Practise with one puppet on each hand. Speak in a different voice for each puppet. Move the puppet only when it is speaking; otherwise keep it quite still.



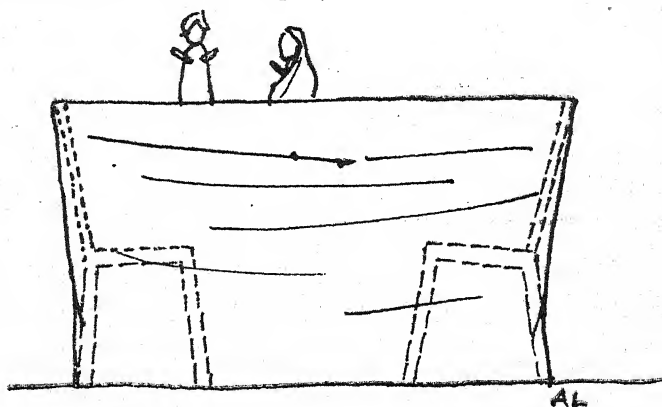
CHAPTER V
PUPPET STAGES

How to Improvise a Stage.

A. Stretch a sari or sheet across the space between two pillars.

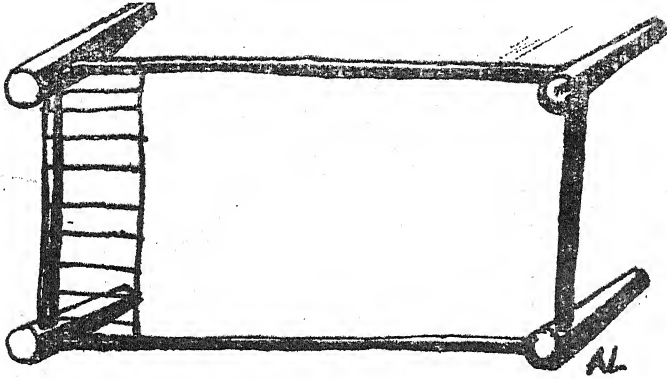


B. Stretch a sari or sheet across the space between two chairs, placed face to face. The seats of the chairs may be used to keep property needed during the play.

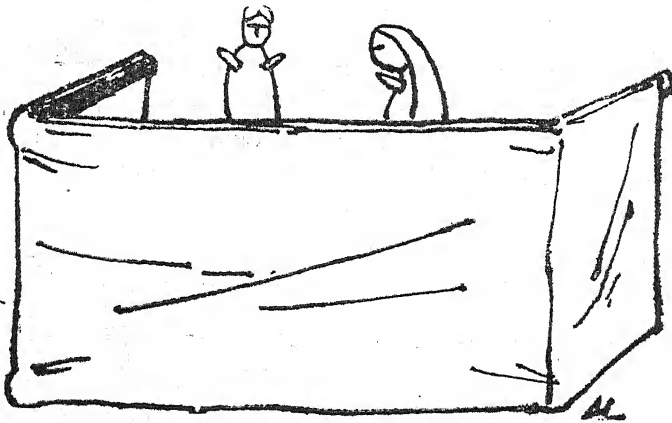


G. The one-charpoy stage.

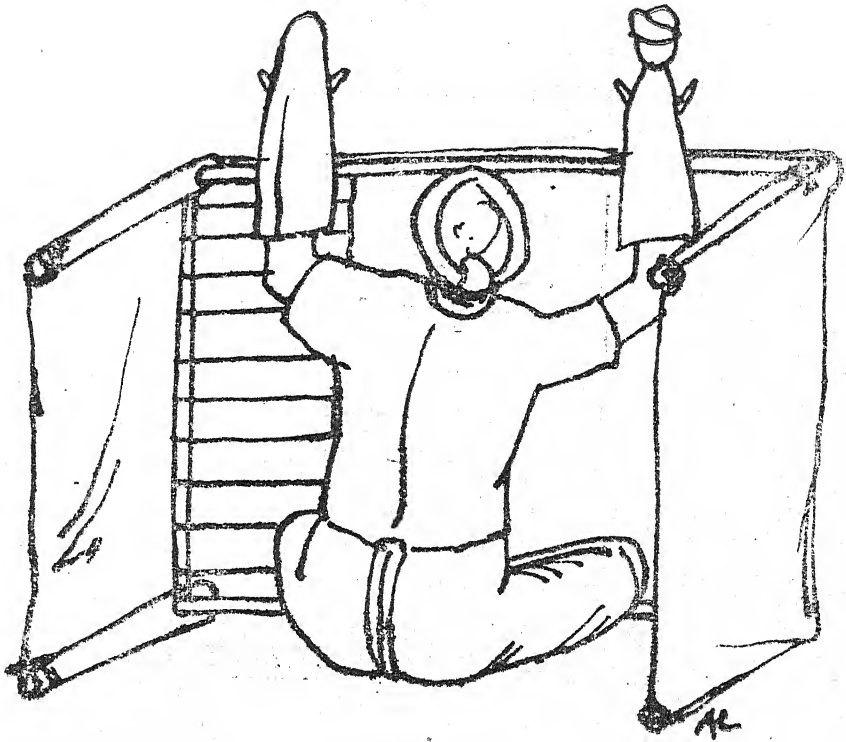
1. The frame of the screen is a charpoy turned on its side.



2. Drape sheets, curtains, blankets or rugs over this frame and fasten securely so as to form a screen.



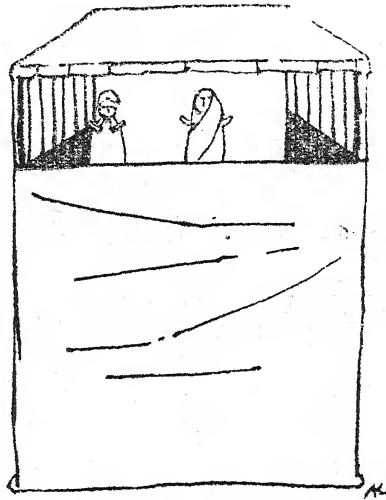
3. The puppeteers sit behind the screen and hold up the puppets on their hands so that the spectators see the puppets above the screen.



The puppeteers themselves must not be seen by the audience. If the charpoy is not high enough, it can be raised by placing a few bricks underneath it.

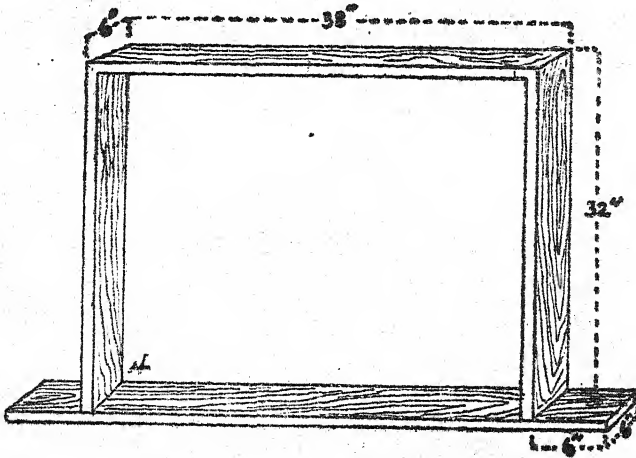
D. The two-charpoy stage.

Up-end two charpoys, facing each other, and cover these with two saris or sheets as shown in the diagram.

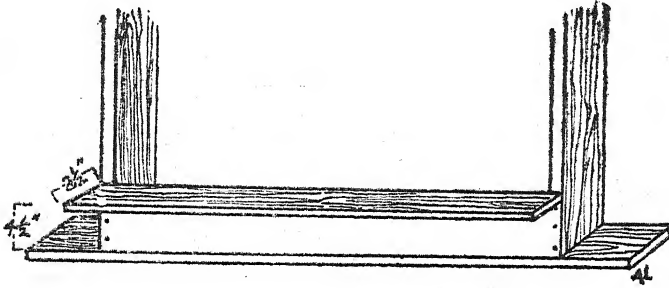


How to make a semi-collapsible portable stage.

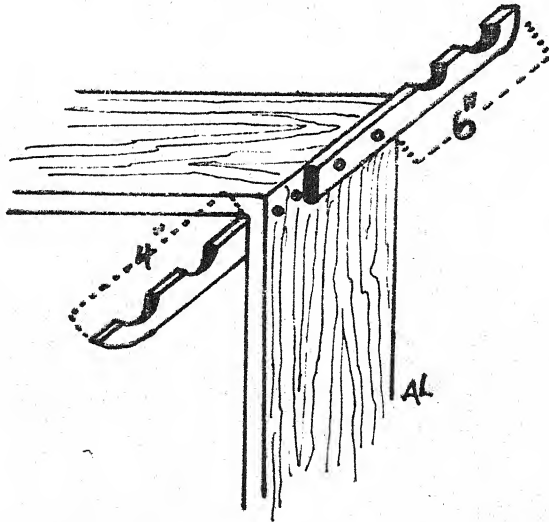
1. Make a frame of light wood 32 inches high, 38 inches wide, and about 6 inches deep. The lower end of the frame should extend 6 inches on either side.



2. Fix a shelf at the lower end of the frame about $4\frac{1}{2}$ inches high and $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches wide. Fill in the space between the shelf and the bottom of the frame with a strip of thin wood.



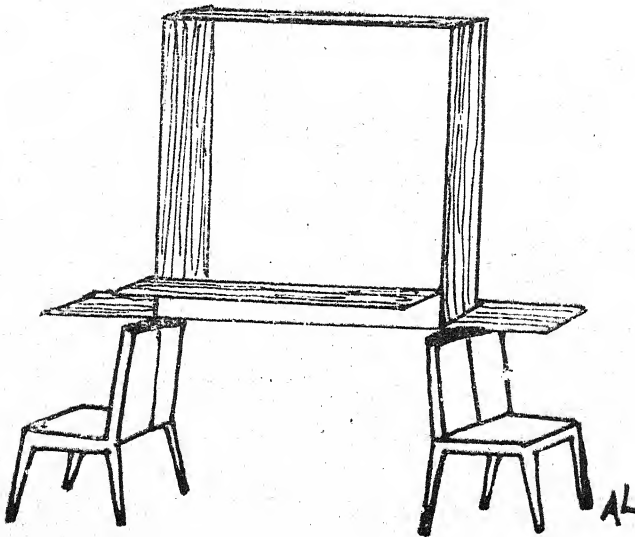
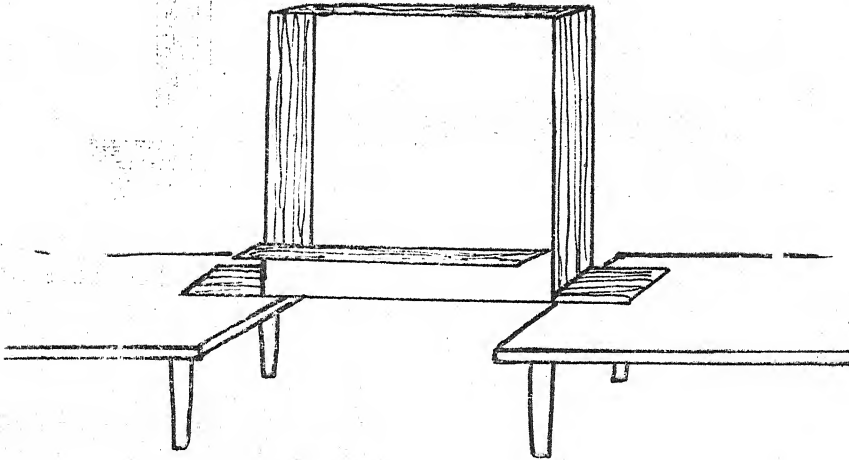
3. Fix a bracket at each upper corner, extending about 4 inches in front and 6 inches behind. These brackets have two grooves at the back, and two at the front. On these grooves rest the poles from which the curtains hang.



4. Make 2 poles about 1 inch in diameter and 89 inches long

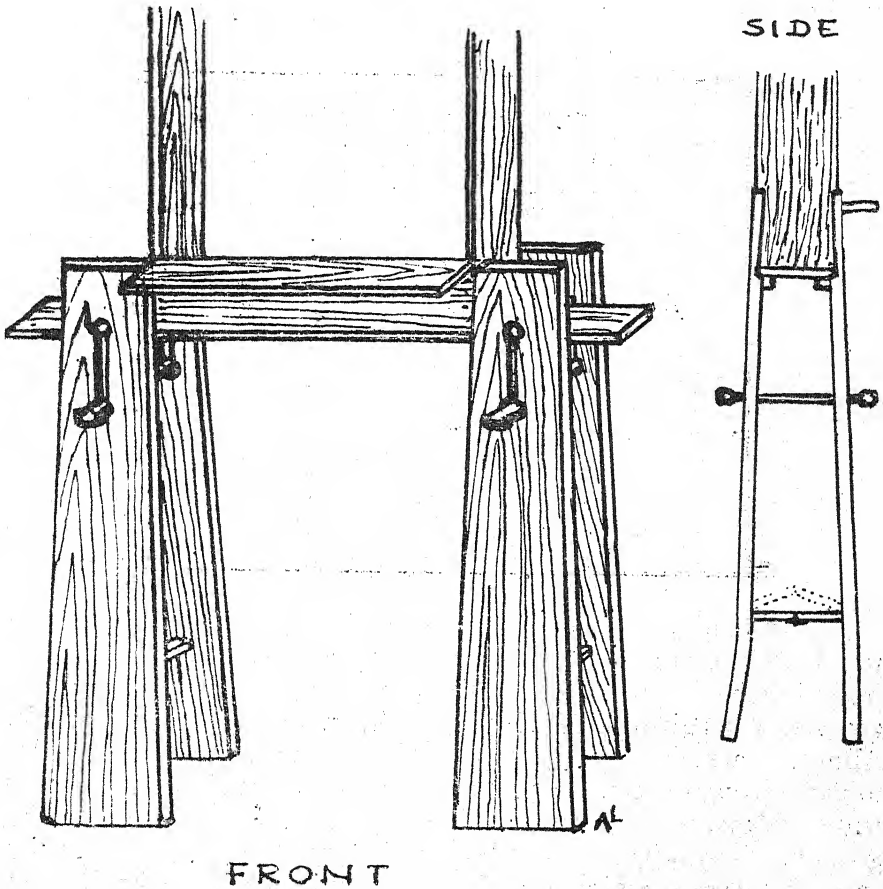
"	2	"	"	1	"	"	"	"	44	"	"
"	2	"	"	$\frac{3}{4}$	"	"	"	"	26	"	"
"	1	"	"	$\frac{3}{4}$	"	"	"	"	44	"	"

5. The frame must be supported on a stand placed under the extended parts of the bottom of the frame. The stand can be

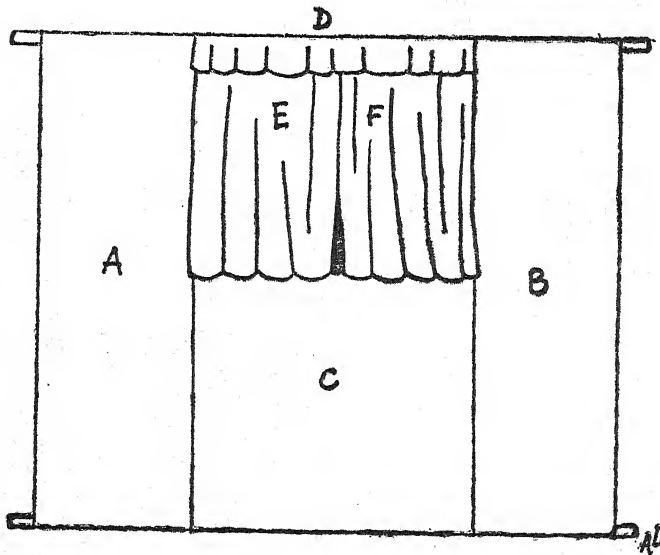


specially made or it can be the backs of two chairs, two boxes or two tables of equal height.

6. The puppeteers can sit or stand, but the height of the stand needs to be adjusted so that the puppeteers' elbows rest comfortably on the lower edge of the frame. One type of stand is built on the principle of trestle and can be folded for transport or when not in use. See diagram below :



7. Curtains must be made to hide the puppeteers and their props from view. There are three sets of curtains, namely, the proscenium, front stage and back stage curtains. The *proscenium curtains* surround the stage in front. They should be of some durable opaque material. Bright gaudy colours are not good because they detract attention from the puppets and make it difficult to build up colour combinations and patterns. Dark green is a good colour.



The length of the curtains depends upon the height of the stand. Place one of the 89 inch poles on the front groove of the front bracket. Measure the distance between this pole and the ground. This gives you the length of the two side curtains A and B. Allow for hems top and bottom wide enough for the 89 inch poles to pass through them. These curtains should be about $26\frac{1}{2}$ inches wide. Measure the distance from the bottom of the shelf to the ground. This gives you the length of curtain C, which fills in the space between curtains A and B, under the stage. The bottom

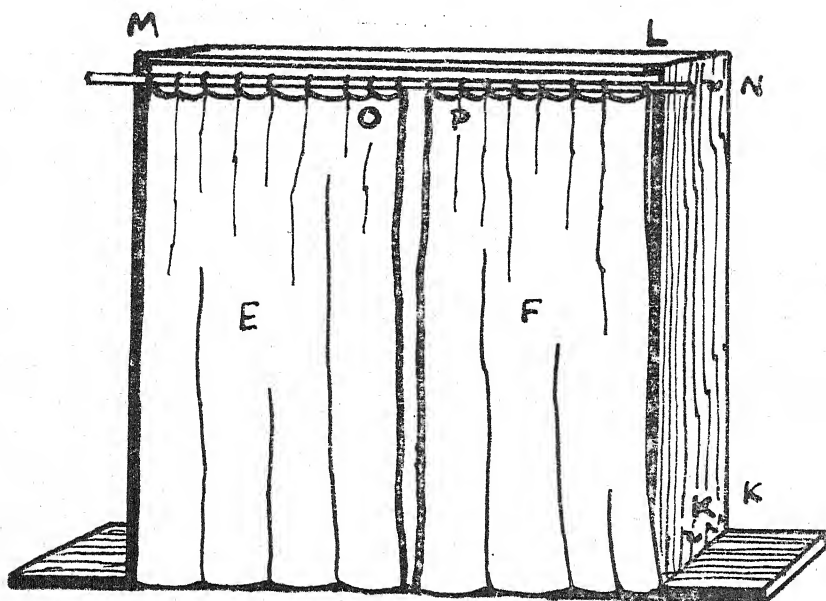
hem of curtain C must be wide enough for the bottom 89 inch pole to pass through it. This curtain C hangs from curtain rings which pass over the hooks attached to the frame under the shelf. A frill D hangs from 89 inch pole above so its upper hem must be wide enough to allow the pole to pass through it. It hangs between curtains A and B and is about 6 to 8 inches deep.

The front stage curtains E and F are drawn together between performances to hide the stage. When these curtains are drawn open during a performance the stage can be seen. The curtains should be of some gay coloured material interesting in design to attract the eye and compel attention when drawn shut. When shut they should overlap and be full enough to fall in folds.

Make two curtains about 30 inches wide and 34 inches long. Attach rings to the upper hem of each curtain. The rings should be large enough to slip easily along the $\frac{3}{4}$ inch diameter of the 44 inch long rod which rests on the back groove of the front bracket. The curtains then may be opened or closed by hand, someone standing at each side of the stage. However, a more professional effect may be achieved by stringing the curtains in such a way that they can be drawn by pulling a cord at one side. This can be done as follows:

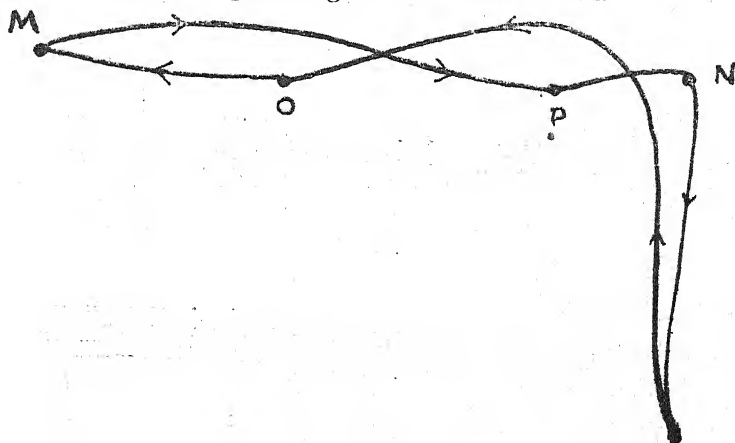
- I. Fix a screw eye or hook at each of the points K, L and M on the front of the frame.
 K is at the lower right side of the frame.
 L is at the top front edge of the frame on the same side as K.
 M is at the top front edge of the frame on the left side (opposite to L)

N is at the upper side of the frame near L.



2. Separate the two curtains which have been placed on the rod and draw them open as far as they will go.
3. Attach one end of a piece of thick string to the hook K.
4. Pass the string over hook L.
5. Tie the string securely to O, which is the second curtain ring on E.
6. Pass the string through M.
7. Stretch the string across the front of the stage to P, the second curtain ring on curtain F and tie it securely to P.

8. Pass the string through N then back to K.

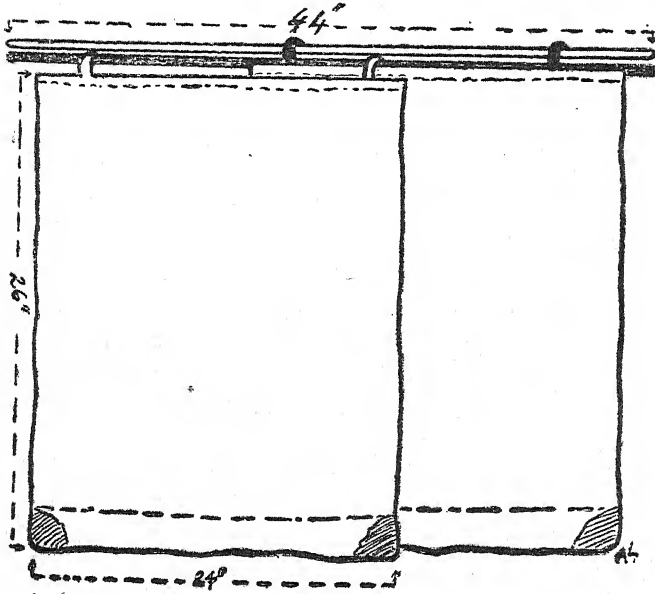


9. Pull one end to open the curtains and the other end to shut them.
10. Sew sandbags or other weights into the lower hems at the centre edge of these curtains so that they hang better.

Back Drop Curtains. These form the back of the stage and hide the puppeteers from the audience. If they are made of thin material and the light shines on them from in front, the puppeteers will be able to see through them clearly enough to see the movements of the puppets. It is best to choose some pale or neutral shade on which scenery can be painted, if so desired.

1. Make two curtains about 24 inches wide and 26 inches long.
2. Make the top hems wide enough for the two $\frac{3}{4}$ inch diameter 26 inch rods to fit inside. These are sewn into the hems.
3. Make a stout cloth loop at the upper ends of each curtain. These loops must be big enough to pass over the 1 inch diameter of the 44 inch long rod from which the curtains are suspended.

4. Hang a curtain by these loops on each of the two rods.
5. Place the rods on the back brackets at the top of the frame. The curtains hang from the rods in such a way that they overlap about 3 inches in the middle and extend either side beyond the back of the frame. This enables the puppeteers to bring puppets in from either side or the middle of the centre back of the stage.
6. Sew small sandbags or other weights in the lower hem of the curtains so that they hang evenly.



CHAPTER VI

HINTS TO WRITERS OF PUPPET PLAYS

The puppet play is drama and should, therefore, conform to the rules for writing drama. A drama is a play written to be acted on a stage. It must be full of action. A play is sometimes written to present a story for entertainment; sometimes a story that presents a problem and its solution.

Interest is aroused at the beginning of the play and must be held throughout. How is this done? One scene follows another in sequence so that the audience follows every detail clearly. The situation on the stage is continually changing. Periods of suspense during which emotions are aroused are followed by periods of emotional release. Laughter is one way of emotional release, and it is always good to introduce humour and wit into the play. Songs and dancing can even be given by puppets. They add lightness.

Early in the play the dramatic question should be introduced. This can be subtle but the audience must be aware of it and kept in suspense until the climax. Soon after the dramatic question is answered the play must end.

Although the bizarre and fantastic have their appeal, the play should not be too far removed from the experience of the audience. Otherwise they will fail to apply it to themselves. When teaching a lesson through a play teach only one thing. This lesson revolves around the dramatic question and the idea must be clear when the play ends.

The characters in the play must be distinctive and may be caricatured. They should introduce themselves or be introduced by the other characters as they make their appearance. The characters should express in the dialogue their most outstanding

characteristic. Speeches should be short. Remember that a puppet can not change its facial expression, nor can it perform too many gestures. It is extremely limited in action. Quick dialogue and short speeches are easy to present.

If necessary, each puppeteer can work two hand puppets at a time. Since the stage frequently permits space for only two puppeteers, this imposes a restriction on the number of characters that can appear together on the stage.

Time must be given to change the puppet on one's hand and yet there must be no long pauses. The plot should run on smoothly until the curtain drops at the end of a scene. If there are pauses the attention of the audience may wander and never be re-captured. Changing of characters can take place between scenes or during the music. The writer must arrange for this when writing the play.

Puppets can not change their dress. Therefore, it is best so to arrange the scenes that each puppet may wear the same costume throughout the play.

It is very confusing to the audience to have two puppets acting one part, for the tendency is to think of each puppet as a person. Some people find it difficult to speak in two different voices. But change of voice must be attempted so the different puppets are not only different to look at but sound different. One person can present a man on one hand, and a woman or child on the other. He deepens his voice for the man and raises it for the woman or the child.

Repetition emphasizes a point and helps the listener to remember the main idea. But repetition must not be dull. The same idea can be expressed in many different ways, particularly if the dialogue is amusing or the lesson set to music.

As you write your play keep your eye on "production". A play is written to be acted on the stage. Ask yourself questions as you review your play. Remember that each word should serve a purpose in the play. No phrase, however clever, should be introduced, unless it contributes to building up the intended

picture. Every word, gesture, action, in the play must contribute something to the whole production. Study the audience. Note its reactions. Never bore it. The audience wants to be entertained, to laugh and share in the fun. But the audience is willing to catch a new idea and if your story moves a listener deeply he may begin to better his own life and the life of his neighbours.

BISHAN'S BRIDE

Characters

Gopi	..	Middle aged villager, father of Bishan
Bishan	..	Young man wanting to get married
Shiv Nath	..	Bride's father
Ram Deo	..	Shiv Nath's friend
Shanti	..	Daughter of Shiv Nath
Dulari	..	Bride's mother
Ram Prasad	..	Village level worker

SCENE I

Courtyard of Shiv Nath's house.

(Shiv enters and sits down. After a short pause he calls out.)

Shiv—Oh, Mother of Shanti, have you finished washing the dishes ? I have something important to discuss with you.

(Dulari replies from off-stage)

Dulari—I am coming, only one vessel more

(Dulari enters right)

Dulari—What is this important thing you have to tell me ? I hope it is not anything bad. Have your crops been spoiled ? Or have your bullocks been hurt while ploughing ?

Shiv—Why do you always think of calamities ? I want to talk to you about our daughter. She is 16 years old and it is high time she should be married.

Dulari—Yes, yes, I was thinking about the same thing. Do you know of any young man who would make Shanti a good husband ?

Shiv—I spoke about this to my friend, Ram Deo.

Dulari—What did he say ?

Shiv—He will come here tonight to tell me about a young man.

(Ram Deo's voice is heard off-stage)

Ram Deo—Namaste, Shiv.

Shiv—Namaste. I was just talking to my wife about you. How are you ?

Ram Deo—By God's blessing I am quite well.

(Dulari goes out of the room)

Ram Deo—Shiv, do you remember you asked me to look for a suitable boy for your daughter ?

Shiv—I remember. Did you find any ?

Ram Deo—Yes.

Shiv—Who ?

Ram Deo—His name is Bishan.

Shiv—As good a name as any other.

Ram Deo—His father's name is Gopi. He lives in Ramnagar.

Shiv—Do you know this Gopi well ?

Ram Deo—Yes, I have known him some years.

Shiv—Is he well off ?

Ram Deo—Oh, yes, he is quite well off. Your daughter won't have to pinch and scrape.

Shiv—He sounds all right.

Ram Deo—Why don't you come with me tomorrow ? We could go together to Ramnagar and make all the necessary arrangements.

Shiv—I cannot do that. I am not free tomorrow. I cannot go this week at all. Will you go for me ?

Ram Deo—Yes, if you would like for me to go.

Shiv—I have every confidence in you and trust you completely.

Ram Deo—Surely, surely.

Shiv—I will be indebted to you for this kindness.

Ram Deo—It is nothing.

Shiv—Remember, a literate boy !

Ram Deo—Don't worry about that. I will find out whether the boy is literate or not. Namaste.
 Shiv—Namaste.

(Both go out)

SCENE II

At Ramnagar outside Gopi's house.

(Enter Ram Deo)

Ram Deo—Gopi, Gopi !

Gopi—Who is there ?

Ram Deo—It is I, Ram Deo.

(Enter Gopi)

Ram Deo—Namaste, my friend.

Gopi—Namaste. But I am sorry I do not recognise you.

Ram Deo—Oh, so soon you have forgotten me. I am the son of Piarey Lal.

Gopi—Really, you are the son of Piarey Lal. I am so glad to see you. Come sit down. It is a long time since I last saw you and you have completely changed. Now tell me what brings you here.

Ram Deo—I heard that you are looking for a nice girl for your son, Bishan. A friend of mine is looking for a suitable boy for his daughter. She is pretty and very good in household work.

Gopi—Yes, it is time for Bishan to marry and I want a nice girl for him. I will call him and you will be surprised to see how he has grown.

(Gopi calls Bishan and his voice is heard off-stage)

(Bishan Enters)

Bishan—Namaste.

Ram Deo—Namaste, son. How you have grown ! Have you finished your studies ?

Bishan—I did not even see school. I only work with my father and help him in his fields.

Ram Deo—It is good to help your father.

Gopi—Now, son, go out. I have something important to talk over with Ram Deo.

(Bishan goes out and Ram Deo and Gopi remain)

Ram Deo—Gopi, your son is perfectly suitable for my friend's daughter. But there is one obstacle.

Gopi—What is that ?

Ram Deo—My friend's daughter has studied up to class VI. So her father wants a literate boy for her. I am sorry I can not ask him to give his daughter to Bishan.

(Ram Deo says Namaste to Gopi and goes out)

Gopi—(to himself)—What a good match it would have been. Woe is me.

(Enter Bishan)

Bishan—Father, you are looking very sad. What has happened to you ?

Gopi—It is no good talking about it, but now I repent of my own foolishness.

Bishan—What is that foolishness for which you repent ?

Gopi—Ram Deo brought a proposal from a good friend for you and he liked you very much. But when he found out that you are illiterate he took back his offer. (Bishan sighs) I wish I had cared for your education. Now there is not time for you to study.

Bishan—Father, this is really sad news and we can not do anything about it.

Gopi—Now, there is no use crying over spilt milk.

(Gopi goes out and Bishan remains there alone. While he is sitting there Ram Prasad, a villager worker passes by)

Ram Prasad—Bishan, why are you sitting alone and looking so sad. What is the matter ?

Bishan—What can I tell you, Master Sahib? Now there is nothing for me but to curse my luck.

Ram Prasad—Tell me something. Perhaps I may be able to help you.

Bishan—Master Sahib, my father got a proposal for me from a good family.

Ram Prasad—Then what happened?

Bishan—The girl is literate and her parents want a literate boy for her. I have never been to school so they took back their offer.

Ram Prasad—Don't moan about that. Do something about it. All is not lost.

Bishan—What can I do?

Ram Prasad—You can learn to read.

Bishan—But won't it take a long time?

Ram Prasad—Not so long. You can learn in a few months if you work hard.

Bishan—But I have my work to do.

Ram Prasad—What work do you do in the evening when it is dark?

Bishan—Nothing.

Ram Prasad—Come to me every evening and I will teach you.

Bishan—If you do that, Master Sahib, I shall never forget my obligation to you.

Ram Prasad—Don't mention it. It is my duty to serve you.

Bishan—I shall be forever grateful.

Ram Prasad—All right. I shall expect you tonight. Now please excuse me as I have some other work to do. Namaste.

Bishan—Namaste.

(Both go out)

SCENE III

(Several months later. Bishan and Ram Prasad are sitting reading)

Bishan—This is a very good magazine. And Ujala is a very good

name for it because I am getting light on many subjects.
And to think four months ago I couldn't read anything.

Ram Prasad—I am glad you subscribed to the magazine. Now you will be able to keep up with everything.

Bishan—That is right. And every one will be impressed with my knowledge. They will think I have been going to school for years. I think I will write a letter to the editor and tell him how much I like his magazine, and I wish he would run some marriage advertisements. It looks like I'll never find a wife.

Ram Prasad—You know Bishan, I was thinking. That proposal from Ram Deo's friend might still be open.

Bishan—I doubt it. Most likely she has found a B.A. by now.

Ram Prasad—Well, I could find out tomorrow if you want me to.
I am going to that village.

Bishan—That's a good idea. Be sure to tell her father how well I can read and write.

Ram Prasad—I'll do that because you really have learned a lot.
Now it is late. We better both get some sleep. Namaste.

Bishan—Namaste.

(Both go out)

SCENE V

(Outside Ram Deo's House)

Ram Prasad—Ram Deo, Ram Deo.

Ram Deo—Who is there?

Ram Prasad—It is I, Ram Prasad.

(Enter Ram Deo)

Ram Deo—Namaste.

Ram Prasad—I have come from Ramnagar. I am a teacher there.
I teach adult villagers. I want to talk to you about something important.

Ram Deo—Well, what is it that is important? Please tell me.

Ram Prasad—Some months ago you brought a proposal for Gopi's son.

Ram Deo—Yes, that is right.

Ram Prasad—But when you found out that Gopi's son was illiterate you withdrew your offer.

Ram Deo—The girl's father insisted on a literate boy.

Ram Prasad—Do you know if there have been other offers?

Ram Deo—Yes, but I don't think any offers have been accepted. Why do you ask?

Ram Prasad—Gopi can now read and write well.

Ram Deo—Indeed?

Ram Prasad—Yes, he was sorry to be turned down. So he determined to learn to read and write.

Ram Deo—In so short a time?

Ram Prasad—Yes, there is a new method of teaching and any one can learn quickly and become literate in a short time.

Ram Deo—I did not know about that.

Ram Prasad—If Shivrath's daughter is still unmarried, perhaps you can arrange the match.

Ram Deo—What does Gopi's father say?

Ram Prasad—He asked me to appeal to you.

Ram Deo—Oh! I am so glad to hear this and now I am sure Shivrath won't have any objection to this match.

Ram Prasad—Namaste, brother.

Ram Deo—Namaste.

(Both go out)

SCENE VI

(At Shivrath's house)

Dulari—Oh, father of Shanti, is everything ready?

Shiv Nath—Yes, everything is ready. Sweets have come and the music party will be arriving shortly.

Dulari—He is a fine boy.

Shiv Nath—Yes, I am happy in our choice of a son-in-law.

Dulari—If everything is ready we had better go so the ceremony
can start.

(Portray the ceremony as far as the skill of the puppeteers
permits)

Music and Song

(*All go out*)

THE WINE OF LIFE

Characters

Ram Prasad	..	A villager
Jeevan	..	Ram Prasad's friend
Ramkali	..	Ram Prasad's wife
Ramesh	..	Village teacher

SCENE I

(Ram Prasad is sitting alone in front of his house talking to himself)

Ram Prasad—I am feeling very weary and bored. I could not get a drink last night. Jeevan, too, has not turned up. There is nobody here to talk with. I am simply fed up with this life.

(While he is talking Jeevan, his friend enters.)

Jeevan—Ram Prasad! Ram Prasad!

Ram Prasad—Is it you, Jeevan? Come in, Come in. So long I have been waiting for you. I very badly want "toddy." Last night I could not get any. Please bring some for me. Otherwise I will die.

Jeevan—If you so badly need "toddy" then come to Haoli. There is no pleasure in having "toddy" here.

Ram Prasad—I won't go to Haoli. I want "toddy" here.

Jeevan—I can't bring it here. Already I have had enough abuse from your wife for taking "toddy". Come on, let us go to Haoli and there we can enjoy a dance also.

Ram Prasad—If you say so then let us go and have some there. But you see I don't have any money. So I hope you will be good enough to buy some for me.

Jeevan—Oh, you are talking of money. I don't have money even to take poison. I'll tell you what. . . . You go and bring your wife's bracelet. We can sell that and have money.

(Ram Prasad goes inside his house and Jeevan remains outside. Ram Prasad soon joins him again. Ramkali, his wife, comes from back of house).

Ramkali—Where are you going? Ramoo is weeping. He won't stop. Come and look after him while I cook food. The smoke is not good for his eyes.

Ram Prasad—I shall come back in a few minutes time. You don't have any salt. So I had better buy some.

(Ram Prasad and Jeevan go out)

SCENE II

(Ram Prasad and Jeevan are both enjoying "toddy" in Haoli, a drinking place.)

Ram Prasad—Never before have I enjoyed a drink so much. Give me more. Today I will drink to my heart's content.

Jeevan—It is good you got enough money for the bracelet. Gold on the arm is no good but gold in the hand can bring many pleasures.

Ram Prasad—Yes, and now I want another pleasure. Please call a dancer. I want to see a good dancer. Be sure she is beautiful.

(Jeevan goes out. Ram Prasad sits singing to himself. Jeevan returns with Munni Bai, a dancer)

Jeevan—Here I have brought Munni Bai. She will give us something exciting.

Ram Prasad—Yes, give us a good dance and I will give you a nice present.

(Munni Bai starts dancing and singing. Ram Prasad and Jeevan sit enraptured. They clap when she has finished.)

Jeevan—Wonderful! Wonderful. Out of this world.

Ram Prasad—How fast your feet go. It made me dizzy to watch. It was better than drinking “toddy”. Here take this money and buy yourself something pretty.

(Hands her some money)

SCENE III *Outside Haoli*

Jeevan and Ram Prasad have just come out of Haoli. They meet Ramesh, the village teacher.

Ramesh—Ram Prasad, it looks like you have taken a lot of “toddy” today.

Jeevan—Yes Pandit ji, today he has taken a lot and therefore he does not want to talk to you because his mouth is smelling bad.

Ramesh—Why do you take “toddy”? It will ruin your health. If you must drink then take some good liquor.

Ram Prasad—How can I find out where to get this good liquor?

Ramesh—You can find out from the newspapers.

Ram Prasad—But Panditji, you know I cannot read. So how can I find out about it? If I ask anyone to read it for me they will just tell me I don't need to drink.

Ramesh—You should be able to read for yourself. Then you can find out what you want to know. No one else will know what you are reading.

Ram Prasad—But how can I learn? I am too old to go to school. Besides I don't have time.

Ramesh—I know a very easy method of teaching and if you come to me every evening I can make you literate in no time.

Ram Prasad—But if I go to you to learn reading I won't be able to get my “toddy” at Haoli.

Ramesh—It will be just for a few weeks. And remember you will find out about some liquors that this village does not even know about.

Ram Prasad—Well, just for a few weeks. Jeevan, you better come,

too. I don't want you watching Munni Bai dancing while I am reading.

Jeevan—Well, if you can learn I guess I can, too. Maybe Ramesh has some books about dancers.

(All go out)

SCENE IV

Village teacher is sitting by a chart waiting for his new students.

Ramesh—(looking at his watch). Seven o'clock. Where are they? Most probably they won't keep their promise. More than likely they are at Haoli again drinking.

(Just then Ram Prasad and Jeevan enter)

Ram Prasad—Namaste, Panditji, here we are. See what you can do for us.

Jeevan—Namaste, Panditji. I had a hard time getting Ram Prasad by Haoli. But I got him here. So come, don't let us waste time.

Ramesh—Look here, I have a nice chart which will help you learn. See, it has some interesting pictures on it.

Jeevan—But no dancers. It would be more interesting if there were pictures of dancers.

Ram Prasad—Keep quiet, Jeevan. I want to learn. I have to learn quickly.

Ramesh—Look, this is an aam (mango). Say aam.

Ram Prasad and Jeevan—Aam.

(Ramesh proceeds to teach the chart.)

Ram Prasad—This is easy. Why I am already reading sentences. Soon I can read those newspapers.

Ramesh—You are bright students. You are learning more quickly than any of my other students. Just keep coming and then you can read many books.

Ram Prasad—Well, Jeevan, I guess we are smart enough. Tomorrow night come for me earlier. We won't be late again, Panditji. Namaste.

SCENE V

Three months later. Jeevan and Ram Prasad are sitting by the teacher's house reading books.

Ram Prasad—Panditji, I have read this book all the way through. It is a book about drinking, all right. And it does tell about many kinds of liquors. But it says drinking is bad for your health. You told me a lie, Panditji. You said that liquor is good for your health if it is of good quality. Why did you tell me such a thing?

Ramesh—I didn't say quite that way. I said if you must drink then drink good liquor. If I had said not to drink any you would not have listened. Now that you have started to read you can find out for yourself what is good and bad.

Ram Prasad—Well from these pictures and stories I have found out a lot of things about drinking. It is good I have stopped. You know since I started reading I haven't had time to go to Haoli. Anyway life is not so boring now. What do you think Jeevan?

Jeevan—(looking up from book) You know what I am reading? I am reading a play. And there are some dancers in it. But they are not like Munni Bai. They are showing some of the great events of this country through dances. Really this is an interesting play. And do you know what I am thinking, Panditji?

Ramesh—Tell us.

Jeevan—I think we could get some of the villagers to put on this play. I'll read it to them. And we'll get some really good dancers to take the dancing parts. You know it will be more fun than going to Haoli.

Ram Prasad—That's a good idea, Jeevan. We can give the play in all the villages around here. We can charge something, too, and make some money.

Ramesh—What will you do with the money?

Ram Prasad—We'll use it to start a class for all the villagers so they can learn to read, too.

Jeevan—And we'll use some of it to buy more books so we can have a library. I want to read some more plays and poems.

Ramesh—You are good fellows. I am glad you were my first students. Now you can be teachers for the next class.

(All three sing a literacy song)

READ AND REJOICE

Characters

Ramu	..	A farmer
Laxmi	..	His wife
Gopi	..	Ramu's son
Chandlal	..	Ramu's neighbour
Postman		
Neighbours		
Another child of Ramu		

SCENE I

Ramu—(Entering after work in the field and calling his wife)
Oh, Gopi's mother ! (She does not answer. The child cries inside)

(Again calling) Gopi's mother ! Gopi's mother, what are you doing there ? The food is not ready yet ? Why is the child crying?

Laxmi—(Enters) Oh! How can I do all this work? I have to look after the child and see to the cattle and cook the food in time. Why did you send Gopi to school?

Ramu—Why do you get angry? If you do the work properly, you will get time.

Laxmi—I am not going to send Gopi to school from tomorrow. Let him stay here and help me.

Ramu—You do not know the value of education. Since he has been studying we have been able to answer the letters we are receiving and he reads letters to us. Before that we had to depend on others.

Laxmi—That is not so important. The work in the house is important.

Ramu—If he passes well in the examination, he will get as good a job as Munir has been offered.

Laxmi—(crying) You will not listen to me and you scold me for everything. (She goes)

Ramu—(calling after her) Am I to have no food then?

Laxmi—(turning back) Yes, yes. I will get it quickly. Be patient a little longer.

Ramu—Hurry then ! (Both go out)

SCENE II

(Ramu is sitting. Gopi enters)

Gopi—Father, my teacher told me to join the college at Madras if I pass this examination.

Ramu—College—Madras—What are you talking about?

Laxmi—(from inside)—Gopi, stop your nonsense. You are not going to study any more.

Gopi—My teacher told me that he will try to get a scholarship for me to meet all the expenses.

Ramu—My son, it is not about money that I am worried. How can I send you so far?

(Laxmi enters)

Laxmi—No, no. You must not go.

Gopi—Mother, it is better that I go.

Laxmi—It is better that you stay and work.

Gopi—I will get a better job when I come back than I ever could get if I didn't go.

Laxmi—What will you do so far away from your family and friends?

Gopi—Mother! There is nothing to worry about. My cousin Munir is working there and Dulari and Shiv, my two good friends, are going.

Ramu—We should not hinder him. He should go. He is right.

He will get a better job and be much more useful to us in our business.

Laxmi—You have always done well enough, Gopi's father, and you can't read!

Ramu—Not so well that I could not have done better. Gopi should go.

Gopi—Learning is a weapon in the hand of the wise.

Laxmi—My son, where did you learn these things?

Gopi—At school, Mother.

Laxmi—Didn't I tell you not to send him to school at all?

Gopi—How can we learn without going to school?

Ramu—When do you have to go, Gopi?

Gopi—Within two weeks.

Ramu—Come, let us talk it over.

Laxmi—No one listens to me.

(All go out)

SCENE III

(Ramu and his neighbour are sitting and talking)

Chandlal—Are you hearing from Gopi? How is he doing?

Ramu—Oh, yes. He is very good at his studies. Last week we had a letter from him

Chandlal—When will he be coming?

Ramu—He has not mentioned anything about it.

Chandlal—Munir is not coming. His father had a telegram saying that one of Munir's friends has died and he is staying for the funeral ceremony.

Ramu—Gopi's mother, Oh, Gopi's mother. Bring some water. I am not feeling well. I must go and lie down.

(Laxmi offers water to Ramu and Chandlal)

Laxmi—Here, drink this water. Come slowly and lie down.

(All go out)

SCENE IV

(Ramu and Laxmi are sitting talking. A postman enters and hands over a cover saying 'Telegram' and goes away.)

(Ramu and Laxmi start crying)

Ramu—Oh, Gopi's mother, Oh, Gopi's mother! A telegram from Madras. What can I do?

Laxmi—My son, Gopi, Gopi. Oh, what will I do? Who will look after the cattle and fields? Didn't I tell you not to send him so far?

Younger son—Gopi, Gopi ! What has happened to my brother ? Why are you crying?

(All the neighbours hearing the crying come and join them)
(Gopal enters)

Gopal—What is the matter? Why are you crying?

Laxmi—Oh, oh!

Gopal—What has happened? Father, what has happened?

Ramu—It is Gopi!

Gopi—Yes, it is I, Mother.

Ramu to Laxmi—It is Gopi !

Laxmi (embracing Gopi)—It is my son! My son!

Ramu—Oh! My son. We thought you had died. We received a telegram just now.

Gopi—(laughing)—Why didn't you read that telegram? It was to inform you of my arrival.

Ramu—Oh! My son, what do we know about reading a telegram? We thought telegrams are sent only when people die.

Laxmi—If only we could have read it!

Ramu—Now do you realise the value of education? How foolish we are! For nothing we cried and worried.

Laxmi—Oh, we must send our younger child to school, too. Let him also learn something.

Younger son—Yes, mother, I want to go to school. I want to be like Gopi.

Song (All go out singing)

BORROW SORROW

Characters

Ram Singh	..	A villager
Champa	..	His wife
Leela	..	Ram Singh's daughter
Seth Ji	..	A money lender
Gopal	..	A village social worker
Other villagers		
Bridegroom		
Dancing party		

SCENE I

(Champa and Ram Singh enter and sit down. After a while Champa speaks)

Champa—Leela's father ! O Leela's father ! Listen to me.

Ram Singh—Yes, I am listening.

Champa—Do you realize that our daughter is old enough to be married ?

Ram Singh—Yes, yes.

Champa—We must find a good boy for her.

Ram Singh—Of course, of course !

Champa—How can she stay like this at home any longer ?

Ram Singh—Yes, yes, that's right.

Champa—Why don't you do something about it ?

Ram Singh—Need you ask ?

Champa—I do ask. I should ask.

Ram Singh—You do ask !

Champa—She will soon be too old to remain unmarried.

Ram Singh—Yes, yes, that's right.

Champa—Well, then, why don't you do something about it ? I can't understand you.

Ram Singh—Can't understand me ! You know I have no money.

Champa—You can borrow from some one.

Ram Singh—From whom can I borrow ? Only a money lender.

Champa—Then borrow from him.

Ram Singh—I have just paid up my last loan.

Champa—But after all this will be for your daughter's marriage.

Ram Singh—I still don't like to borrow again so soon.

Champa—But you say you have no money.

Ram Singh—You know I have none.

Champa—Then, you will have to borrow. Our daughter must be married.

Ram Singh—Well, do you have some boy in mind ?

Champa—Yes, I have.

Ram Singh—Who is it ?

Champa—Ram Prasad's son is a very nice boy.

Ram Singh—Yes !

Champa—He would make a good son-in-law.

Ram Singh—Do you think so ?

Champa—He is hard working and intelligent.

Ram Singh—I will think about it.

SCENE II

(Ram Singh enters the money lender's house).

Ram Singh—Namaste, Sethji.

Sethji—Namaste. I haven't seen you for a long time.

Ram Singh—Sethji, I have been busy all this time in my fields.

Sethji—The harvest was good this year ?

Ram Singh—Not so good, Sethji. I have only a little land and this year I sowed much wheat but it did not do well.

Sethji—But I saw plenty of good bajra.

Ram Singh—Not plenty, Sethji. I planted a few rows only.

Sethji—Yes, but what you had was good.

Ram Singh—Sethji, I have a request to make.

Sethji—What is it ?

Ram Singh—I am badly in need of money and you are the only one who can help me.

Sethji—How much do you want ?

Ram Singh—I want it for my daughter's marriage.

Sethji—Oh, so your little girl is getting married ?

Ram Singh—She is now a woman. She cannot remain unmarried any longer.

Sethji—Oh, indeed.

Ram Singh—If you help me now I shall be grateful to you for the rest of my life.

Sethji—I can give only Rs. 150|- at the usual rate of interest.

Ram Singh—Thank you very much for your kindness. I shall return the money as soon as I sell my next crops.

Sethji—Come inside and I will write it in the books.

(Both go out)

SCENE III

(Champa and Ram Singh are busy in making arrangements for their daughter's marriage)

Champa—Have you sent for the sweets ?

Ram Singh—Yes, everything is ready. I have also asked a music party to come.

Champa—I am so happy I can't control myself.

(Music party comes and a dancer starts singing and dancing. After the dance bride and bridegroom come on the stage with garlands around their necks. Bridegroom's friends congratulate him and wish him a prosperous life. Then all go out)

SCENE IV

(Champa and Ram Singh are sitting together before their house)

Ram Singh—Well, our daughter has been married now six months.

Champa—Yes, it was a good arrangement. I am satisfied.

Ram Singh—A good arrangement for her. But what about my arrangement with the money lender ? I saw him look towards me at the bazaar today but I avoided meeting him.

Champa—Well, you can put him off for a while longer.

Ram Singh—I shall have to. For again the crops are not good. But look, who is that coming ? (Champa looks and then hurries into house)

(Money lender approaches)

Sethji—Ram Singh ! Ram Singh !

Ram Singh (standing)—Namaste, Sethji. We were just talking about you. Come sit down.

Sethji—I hope you were talking about paying me the money you owe. Surely your crops are harvested. Really, I cannot wait any longer. Others are making demands on me.

Ram Singh—We were just saying what a kind fellow you are. You helped us out when we were in great need. I am sure you will understand my present difficulty. You know all the crops around have been poor.

Sethji—Yes, I know. But that is the very reason others are pestering me. So I must collect my old debts.

Ram Singh—But I have nothing with which to pay you. We do not have enough even to eat. Surely you can give me a few months longer.

Sethji—Well, if you say so I take your word. But do you know how much you owe me ?

Ram Singh—Yes, Rs. 150|-.

Sethji—What, you took Rs. 200|- and you now say that you borrowed only Rs. 150|-. I never suspected that you are such a fellow.

Ram Singh—No, Sethji. I swear I took only Rs. 150|-. How can I deceive you ?

Sethji—You borrowed Rs. 200|-. And because you are trying to

deceive me I shall not give you any more time. Return the money within a week or I shall sue you.

(Exit Sethji)

Ram Singh—What a calamity ! What shall I do. I will ask my friend the Gaon Sathi, to help me (Exit Ram Singh)

SCENE V

(Enter Ram Singh)

Ram Singh—Gopalji ! Are you at home ?

(Enter Gopal)

Gopal—Who is calling me ?

Ram Singh—I, Ram Singh.

Gopal—What is the matter, brother ? You look worried.

Ram Singh—I have come to ask for your help.

Gopal—What can I do for you ?

Ram Singh—I borrowed Rs. 150 from Sethji at the time of my daughter's marriage.

Gopal—Yes.

Ram Singh—Now he says I borrowed Rs. 200|-.

Gopal—Did you ?

Ram Singh—No, Gopalji. I am telling you the truth. I borrowed only Rs. 150|-.

Gopal—Then Sethji must be making a mistake ?

Ram Singh—Brother, he calls me a liar.

Gopal—How much is written in his book ? That is the important thing.

Ram Singh—How can I tell, brother ? I can't read.

Gopal—I have told you so many times to come to my class and learn reading and writing.

Ram Singh—Yes, yes.

Gopal—You always had some excuse. You said it was not necessary for you to read.

Ram Singh—I did not think there was any need.

Gopal—And now the need has arisen. If you could read Sethji's book you would know how to defend yourself.

Ram Singh—That's true. That's true.

Gopal—This time you have suffered because you are illiterate.

Ram Singh—Yes, that is true. I am unfortunate.

Gopal—Not unfortunate, but unwise. Why not learn, Ram Singh?

Ram Singh—I am old.

Gopal—Not as old as Shankar and he has learnt to read these last few weeks.

Ram Singh—Very well. I will try. When can I start?

Gopal—I am always here to help you. This evening?

Ram Singh—Yes, I will come to your classes, but what about this money, how can I get hold of so much more?

Gopal—How much longer have you?

Ram Singh—Only a week.

Gopal—Then you will have to sell something.

Ram Singh—There is the small field. It is not good to sell my land, but what can I do?

Gopal—Perhaps you need sell only a portion of it; come let us see what we can figure out.

(Both go out)

SCENE VI

(Gopal goes to Ram Singh's house. Enter Gopal)

Gopal—Ram Singh, Ram Singh !.

Ram Singh—I am coming, Masterji.

(Enter Ram Singh)

Ram Singh—Namaste, namaste, Masterji.

Gopal—Namaste, brother, how are you? Is everything all right in your house.

Ram Singh—By God's blessings everything is fine.

Gopal—Good. I have brought you a book. To-day I received a

new set of books for my class. And when I saw this one I thought I must take it to my good friend, Ram Singh. Of all my class you are the one who will appreciate it most. So I wanted you to have first chance.

Ram Singh—That is good of you. But do you think I can read it ? It looks thick.

Gopal—That's because it has so many pictures in it. But any way you can read it. You really have made wonderful progress in four months. This book tells what some farmers in another village did to improve their crops. Here, see, it shows how much more they are getting from the same amount of land.

Ram Singh (looking at book)—What I need to know is how to get more crops from less land. Remember I had to sell a piece to pay off that scoundrel Sethji.

Gopal—Yes, that was too bad. Well, I hope the book will be some help. I must be on my way now as I have some work. (Gopal goes out. Ram Singh also goes out. Then Ram Singh returns and calls his wife).

Ram Singh—Leela's mother. O Leela's mother.

Champa (off stage)—Wait a few minutes. I am cooking.

(Ram Singh sits reading. Soon his wife comes)

Champa—What is it, Leela's father ?

Ram Singh—I have some good news to tell you.

Champa—Thank goodness. At last you have something good to tell me. Tell me quickly what it is.

Ram Singh—Masterji has given me this book. It tells about some farmers who got bigger and better crops by using nitrogen on their fields.

Champa—Nitrogen ? What is that ? You use a lot of big words now that you can read.

Ram Singh—Nitrogen is a kind of fertilizer. Cow dung would be just as good but we don't have enough. I can buy nitrogen from the government factory.

Champa—Really if it is so then why don't you ? We can then make more money.

Ram Singh—But the trouble is we don't have enough money to buy it. I shall try to get some from Sethji.

Champa—Oh, don't go to him. He will cheat you again and you will have to sell all our land.

Ram Singh—This time he cannot fool me. Now, I can read and know what he writes.

Champa—If you think so then go to him and ask for the money.

(Exit Ram Singh and later Champa)

SCENE VII

(Ram Singh goes to Sethji to get money)

Ram Singh—Namaste, Sethji. Sethji, I need Rs. 50. I have to buy some fertilizer.

Sethji—No, no, I cannot give you a single pie. When the time of returning comes, you tell lies and do not want to return the sum to me. Go away from here.

Ram Singh—No, Sethji, this time it won't happen. I promise, I shall return the money at the fixed time.

Sethji—Well, if you say so, I will give it to you but remember if you refuse to return it at the agreed time I will drop you in court.

(Sethji counts Rs. 50 and gives to Ram Singh)

Sethji—Here are Rs. 50. Now make your thumb impression on this paper.

(Ram Singh takes the paper and looks at it)

Ram Singh—Oh, Sethji, I took only Rs. 50 and you have put down Rs. 100. In this way you cheat poor men. This is what you did before. You wrote Rs. 200 when I borrowed only Rs. 150 but because you had my thumb print I could do nothing. You called me a liar. You are a liar—a liar—a cheat—a swindler.

(Enter Gopal)

Gopi—What is the matter?

Ram Singh—He has tried the same trick on me again. I asked for Rs. 50 and he has written Rs. 100 in his book but I can read now and I will not sign it. He is a liar ! He will not cheat me again.

Gopal—Are you not glad you can read ?

Ram Singh—Oh, so glad.

(Starts singing song after which all go out)

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